

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 03752 041138Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1613

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 3752

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, PORT, SF, WA

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: IMPLICATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE DELAY

1. AS ALL CONCERNED PARTIES ARE AWARE, EVIN IF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL ON NAMIBIA WERE COMMENCED IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE TO MEET THE DECEMBER 31 DEADLINE FOR INDEPENDENCE IN THE TIME ALLOTTED BY THE PROPOSAL TO THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

2. WHILE IT IS CONCEIVABLE THE SOUTH AFRICANS WILL SEEK A TELESOPING OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS TO MEET THE DECEMBER 31 DEADLINE, THEY HAVE INDICATED READINESS TO COUNTENANCE SLIPPAGE IN THAT DATE. THIS IS OUR
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PAGE 02 PRETOR 03752 041138Z

READING OF THE REFERENCE IN THE SAG PAPER GIVEN THE PRETORIA FIVE ON JUNE 28 TO STAYING "AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE TO THE TARGET DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE, 31 DECEMBER 1978" (PRETORIA 3646). AN AIDE TO FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA ALSO TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT THE SAG RECOGNIZES THAT IF THERE IS AGREEMENT ON THE PROPOSALS, THE ELECTION AND INDEPENDANCE DATE WILL HAVE TO SLIP

INTO NEXT YEAR (CAPE TOWN 1096).

3. ASSUMING INITIATION OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD BY THE END OF JULY, THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WOULD NOT BE CONVENED UNTIL LATE FEBRUARY OR EARLY MARCH, 1979. THIS WOULD PUT THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND THE ELECTIONS IN THE MIDST OF THE NOVEMBER-MARCH RAINY SEASON WHICH MAKES MOVEMENT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT IN MUCH OF THE POPULOUS NORTHERN REGION. THIS MIGHT BE DISADVANTAGEOUS TO THE TURNHALLE RALLY-STYLE CAMPAIGNING. SWAPO, MIGHT CONSIDER ITS SUPPORT ALREADY WELL ENOUGH ESTABLISHED IN OVAMBO TO BE LESS DISTURBED ON THIS GROUND, BUT IT WOULD LIKELY BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF A RELATIVELY LOW POLL RESULTING FROM WEATHER CONDITIONS.

4. IDEALLY, TO ASSURE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL VOTERS TO PARTICIPATE, THE 4-MONTH CAMPAIGN PROJECTED BY THE PROPOSAL SHOULD BEGIN IN MARCH 1979 AT THE EARLIEST, WITH ELECTIONS IN JULY. IF, AS IS MOST UNCERTAIN, THE SAG WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT SUCH A LONG DELAY, IT MIGHT INSIST THAT THE UNTAG NOT BE INTRODUCED INTO NAMIBIA UNTIL SEVEN MONTHS PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS--I.E., JULY 1979--AS ENVISIONED BY THE PROPOSAL, I.E., NOT UNTIL DECEMBER 1978. (IT MIGHT ALSO SEEK TO STRETCH THE DRAWDOWN OF SA FORCES OVER A LONGER PERIOD THAN THE PRESENTLY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PRETOR 03752 041138Z

PLANNED THREE MONTHS.) THE ALTERNATIVE TO DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION WOULD BE TO STRETCH OUT THE TRANSITION PROCESS. IF THE SAG AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO THIS COURSE, IT WOULD VERY LIKELY INSIST THAT THE INITIAL TRANSITION PERIOD INVOLVING THE GRADUAL DRAWDOWN OF SAG FORCES SHOULD BE EXTENDED AS NECESSARY WHILE THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN PERIOD SHOULD REMAIN SET AT FOUR MONTHS AS CALLED FOR IN THE PROPOSAL. SWAPO, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL PROBABLY WANT: A DELAY IN THE POLLING DATE; PROMPT INTRODUCTION OF UNTAG ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE SADF DRAWDOWN IN THREE MONTHS; AND EXTENSION OF THE TIME ALLOTTED TO CAMPAIGNING. THERE MIGHT BE SOME MIDDLE GROUND WHICH THE PARTIES COULD CONCEIVABLY ACCEPT--E.G., COMMENCING THE CAMPAIGN IN THE RAINY SEASON BUT PROVIDING THAT THE LATTER HALF OF THE CAMPAIGN AND THE ELECTIONS WERE HELD AFTER THE RAINS.

5. WHATEVER TRANSPIRES, THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF MEETING THE DECEMBER 31 DATE LEAVES AMPLE ROOM FOR CONTENTION BEFORE, DURING, OR AFTER SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION. THE MATTER SHOULD PROBABLY NOT BE RAISED BY US UNTIL THE SECURITY

COUNCIL ACTS, BUT THE FIVE SHOULD BE READY WITH A POSITION WHEN IT IS SURFACED. WE SUGGEST THE AIM OF THE FIVE SHOULD BE ADHERENCE AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE TO THE PROPOSAL'S TIMETABLE, THE THE COMMENCEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION IMMEDIATELY AFTER SECURITY COUNCIL APPROVAL. WHILE THIS COULD RUN THE RISK OF SEEMING TO GIVE ADVANTAGE TO ONE PARTY OVER THE OTHER, DELAYING OR STRETCHING OUT THE TRANSITION PROCESS WOULD ONLY ALLOW MORE TIME FOR MISADVENTURE AND COULD STIMULATE TEMPTATION TO TINKER WITH OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL. CONCEIVABLY SOME KIND OF PROVISION MIGHT BE MADE FOR AUTHORIZING THE SAG AND THE UNSR TO AGREE AFTER IMPLEMENTATION HAD BEGUN ON SOME LIMITED TIME-FRAME ADJUSTMENTS IF THE SITUATION CLEARLY CALLED
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PAGE 04 PRETOR 03752 041138Z

FOR THEM.
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